OPERATIONS MEMO
Update of the California Student Aid Commission

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TO: **Financial Aid Administrators**
                High School Counselors

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SUBJECT: **Information Security for WebGrants Participants**

On April 17, 2007, the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) approved the inclusion of an Information Security section into the Institutional Participation Agreement (IPA) that is sent to all institutions participating in the WebGrants program.

This Information Security section (Article VI) is an adaptation of requirements found within previous and current WebGrants Information Security and Confidentiality Agreements, with additions required by state and federal regulations regarding the security and disposition of confidential student aid data being accessed by the institutions.

Several regulations require holders of confidential data, including CSAC, to exercise due diligence in the protection of this data, and to ensure that third parties being granted access to the data maintain certain information security standards. Institutional participants involved with the drafting process requested that CSAC provide the training that would be sufficient to meet CSAC's regulatory requirements and that could be incorporated into their own institutional Information Security programs.

The Commission's Information Security Officer has developed a training and awareness document for new or renewing institutional financial aid administrators that are given WebGrants access. This training shall be reviewed annually by all institution employees and agents for continued access. (IPA Article VI, Institutional Requirements, Item G).

This training document contains:

- o An overview of many applicable laws relating to institutions handling of confidential data;
- o The institution's Information Security requirements under the IPA;
- o Requested practices to transfer confidential data between institutions and CSAC;
- o Instructions regarding any breach of CSAC's confidential data at an institution; and
- o Recommendations and requirements for good information security practices.

This training can be found in WebGrants on the help screen, under the section titled Information Security, called "IPA Information Security Training", as a PDF document that is readable using the free Adobe Reader program (http://www.adobe.com/reader).

CSAC's Program Compliance staff will also include elements of this Information Security component into their compliance reviews.

At the request of institutions, the section covering the secure transfer of confidential data between institutions and CSAC was excerpted and included in a standalone document that is located at the WebGrants help screen and is titled, "Secure Data Transfer". CSAC has developed and is currently testing a secure transfer capability within WebGrants that will allow for the secure transfer of confidential information between CSAC and institutions without having to encrypt it and send it via email separately. A notice will be released when this capability is available.

The training document will be updated as new laws and regulations require, but will be placed in the same location for your retrieval and review as part of the annual WebGrants account renewal process.

If you have any questions, please contact CSAC's School Support Services Branch at (888) 294-0153 or use the email address contained on the last slide of the training document.

Your assistance in promoting WebGrants for Students is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your continued partnership in serving students.

Working together to effectively promote education beyond high school!